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## JUSTICE TO THE CHILD

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In no place in America would it be more fitting to raise one's voice against the evils and wrongs of child labor than in Faneuil Hall. The very air of this place is redolent of freedom. Seeing that "The Cry of the Children" has not been heard, it is meet that we here cry out, on behalf of the children, in protest against the iniquity of the enslavement of the child, which, if anything, is even more unjust and iniquitous than the enslavement of man.

The inclusive and undeniable right of children is to childhood; that is, to the life of a child. Not to labor is implicit in every right of the child. The term child labor is a paradox, for when labor begins in the modern industrial sense of that term, the child ceases to be. The child that labors is robbed of its childhood—is no child.

It is one of the many paradoxes of our social order that we face two parallel and related evils, child labor on the one hand and widespread unemployment on the other. Two tragic and irreconcilable spectacles confront us; first, the unemployed man who has a right to work, and, second, the employed child, who has the right not to work. In justice to its citizenship, and in self-defense, the state ought to deal in wise and statesmanlike fashion with both problems. Unemployment entails hardship, misery, deterioration upon the unemployed, the consequences of which things endure through many generations to the hurt of the state. Child labor kills its victims or it cripples and maims the unborn children of its survivors.

The new world for the child was born amid the industrial conditions of the nineteenth century, which overwhelmed the child with tasks and burdens never before borne by it. The newer world, which is to follow upon the childhood-endangering epoch of the industrial awakening, is to shield and defend the child. The new world surrounded the child with an environment to meet which the newer world must fortify the child, that it may triumph. The new world meant an age of children's wrongs and children's rights; the newer world presages the righting of children's wrongs.

The keynote of the newer world's attitude to the child will be thoroughness, which means enlightened and efficient justice. The state will put away the uncertain and tinkering methods, which it has heretofore employed in dealing with the child. England has introduced a system of old-age pensions, which is peculiarly revolting to those who have never been distressed by the spectacle of men thrown to the ash heap after twenty or thirty or forty years of faithful service in the industrial army.

Some day a wisely far-seeing state will introduce a system of child pensions or child bounties. Under present economic conditions, child labor cannot be prevented by laws—even when loosely drawn and lightly enforced. In the event of the breadwinner of the family being lost through death or desertion, the state ought to allow the needed subsidy to the home, that the child may be kept in school or in the home and kept away from industry. Through what might be called child pensions, which would really be home pensions, the state can prevent child labor and maintain the integrity of the home of the widow or deserted wife. In its desire to be thorough, the state will refuse to accept orphan asylums as inevitable homes for ever-increasing multitudes of children. Orphanhood will not long be tolerated as an incident of industrialism. The state must do everything that lies within its power in order to protect children, not by placing them in orphan asylums, but in sheltering them from orphan asylums by stopping the needless slaughter of fathers in shop and factory and mine. Let our societies for the prevention of cruelty to children deal not only with the occasional cruelty of a father to his child, but with that nation-wide cruelty which robs the child of its father! Before the care of the orphaned child must come such care on the part of the state as shall safeguard the life and health of the men "who are carrying us on their backs".

Child labor is a national question, not sectional nor even predominantly Southern. When Sumner was told that slavery was sectional, he replied that while slavery might be sectional, freedom was national. This epigram must be reversed with regard to the labor of women and children; industry is national, but protection is sectional. Even if it were true that no child labor is to be found in the North, and that it abounds only in the South, the North is still more culpable than the South, though the South seem to invite child labor.

The South is in a measure the victim of circumstances. Southern industrialism is still in its beginning, and the South has naturally yielded to the terrible pressure of northern temptation. The tempting and oppressing capital of the North is far more guilty than the tempted capital-lacking Southland. Child labor is, legislatively speaking, under control in New York and New England, but northern capital is not under control. For northern capital has made a way for itself, has built child labor mills in the South, and while seeming to enrich its present, is impoverishing and damning the South's future. Northern capital is guilty of southern child labor—guilty of what Professor Ross has called long-distance or wireless sin—for the northern capitalist gets his dividends from southern child-labor products, though divided by a thousand miles and more from his little victims. The South is becoming, alas, a dumping ground for northern capital. The South demands the acquiescence of the North in its political methods and social-industrial ideals, and the North is unconsciously taking its revenge in crushing out the lives of the little children of the Southern States.

It is not impossible to awaken the conscience of men of affairs so that they shall be moved to refuse to have part either directly or indirectly in social wrongdoing. It is heartening to be able to refer to the English and Continental firms which have taken the position of refusing to purchase cocoa from the establishments of St. Thome and Principe, Portuguese islands off the west coast of Africa, because upon investigation it was proved that the cocoa of these islands represents the work of negroes, who have been forcibly enslaved in the Portuguese possessions in Africa. The largest manufacturing establishment of its kind in this country, stationed not very far from here, has similarly taken the high position that it will not handle the products of what is nominally contract, but actually slave, labor. If industrial establishments are ready to refuse to handle the products of child labor, is it not possible to foster and stimulate the sentiment that men and women, and perhaps especially women, shall refuse to purchase the products of child labor, which is always, as we have said, child slavery? It may not be possible to invoke interstate law against the products of child labor, but it is possible to inaugurate a moral movement that shall pledge men and women to avoid touching the products of child labor.

With what ability and assiduity the Consolidated Gas Com-

pany of New York fought the legislation which provided for a reduction in the cost of gas to the consumer! According to newspaper statements, more than a million dollars has been expended in opposing this legislation and carrying it to the highest courts. When will the forces leading the war upon child labor be endowed with one million dollars in order to fight this evil as effectively? In dealing with the problem of child labor, we are reminded all the time that state rights are sacred and inviolable, that property rights are sacred and inviolable. One is tempted to ask—when will the rights of childhood come to be regarded as sacred and inviolable? Child labor is preventable or it is not. If it be not preventable, then is the present order bankrupt; if it be preventable, as it is, then, pending its prevention, we are morally bankrupt who endure it.

An amazing revelation touching the hopelessness of political or strictly legislative help in the matter of bettering child labor conditions came to light recently in a New York court. There it was shown that the agent of a candidate for President, with millions rather than of the millions, wrote to the man who had been hired to grind out statesmanlike utterances for the candidate, "I cut that factory thing out. The South is against child labor, but objects to legislation on it." This attitude of objection to child labor but of unwillingness withal to remedy it through the processes of legislation is not unlike the position of the man in Maine who said that he was for prohibition but against its enforcement. Alas, that we may not expect too much through legislative intervention and relief. The ends of justice are too often defeated by means of the law, and, it might be added, the meanness of law officers. The high aims of justice are often circumvented and defeated by the technicalities of legal procedure. It was Lord Melbourne who said: "Do not touch the church; it's the last great bulwark against Christianity." Almost might the defenders of child labor say: "Do not touch the law; it's the last great bulwark against justice."

The child labor warfare is not one of a multitude of tasks for the social reformer. It is not something over and around which men are to "committee", but a high and exigent cause to which men are to be committed. On the one hand, the National Child Labor Committee can do little or nothing without the united support of the people's conscience and the people's will; on the other hand, the National Child Labor Committee ought to inspire and

direct public revolt against this iniquity of iniquities. The child labor crusade is a vital thing because child labor can do the Republic fatal hurt. The church ought to have not one child labor Sunday, but fifty-two child labor Sundays in the year, even as the church is not to preach *at* the workingman one day in the year, but *for* the workingman every day in the year. Time was when the founder of Christianity said: "Suffer little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Time is when those who are causing Christianity to founder may say: "Little children are to come to us that they may suffer, for theirs shall be the tortures of hell."

Child labor is to be fought positively and constructively and not merely negatively and obstructively. Child labor is to be overcome by better schools and compulsory school laws that are honestly and diligently enforced. Child labor is to be fought by the industrial school that is coming into being, but the industrial school that is to be must be under state control lest it become a scab nursery, a kindergarten for strike-breakers, an adjunct of citizens' alliances which sometimes seem to be alliances to break down the citizenship of the nation.

Child labor is to be immediately repressed and ultimately suppressed that justice may be done to the child. President Roosevelt once said that we could not afford to neglect the children—to which we add that we would not neglect the children even if we could afford to do so. Child labor ought to be abolished not so much at the behest of the duty of safeguarding the Republic, but rather because of the duty of the Republic to safeguard its children. The child labor battle should be waged on the highest possible ground—the right of the child to justice. At the same time, to avert the terrible evils which are sure to follow upon the criminal wastefulness of child labor is the part of high and enlightened statesmanship. We are beginning to plan for the conservation of our national resources. Let us conserve our most precious national resource, the life and joy of childhood. An impaired childhood and a maimed youth mean a marred state.

Science may cry—save the child for the sake of the future; religion—for the sake of God; education—for the sake of the people; democracy—for the sake of the State; industry—for the sake of efficiency. Conscience cries—save the child for its own

sake. For the child is not only the trustee of the past and the hope of the future, but it is the living present, entitled to every protection and security and furtherance which man grants to man and as much more than is granted to man as is required by the defenselessness of the child.

Our democracy ought to lead the world in the things that make for democracy and not in the things that make against democracy, such as big armies and bigger navies. About twenty million dollars will be expended upon the two additional battleships voted by the late Congress, and these will be dead junk within ten or fifteen years. Viewing the present annual income of the National Child Labor Committee, no such resources will be at its command within two hundred years, though child labor be a real and terrible peril and the yellow peril largely the figment of a jaundiced and diseased vision. Let us imitate England not in Dreadnought building, but in fearless safeguarding of our children's rights.

If it be said that anti-child labor legislation savors of paternalism, let it be answered that the state ought to show a paternal "concern for the safety and defense of the industrial workers". Socrates said: "Our country is to be loved more and better by far than father or mother." If we love the state as a mother, then should the state dare to mother its wronged children toilers. "Every man possesses the right to legislate for himself"—is dinned into our ears. Does every woman possess the power to legislate for herself? Does every child possess the power to legislate for itself? Surely a democracy owes a special duty to its unenfranchised children and its disfranchised women. The state ought to paternalize; at present it step-paternalizes. The hand that wrecks the cradle wrecks the world. What of a nation that suffers both to be wrecked—the cradle-child and the mother-hand? The state has not hesitated to protect infant industries, and rather big and lusty infants they are, according to the recent admission of one of the chief beneficiaries. That was the wrong kind of paternalism. Now let us have the right kind of paternalism, which shall not protect infant industries, but shall protect infants from industry.

How carefully we would guard ourselves against the dread possibility of any goods being shipped from the South if any section of the Southland should be afflicted by a visitation of yellow fever. Shall we be less alert to protect not only ourselves but the nation

against the deadly effect of moral disease, a symptom of which is to be found in the evil of child labor? The state promptly intervenes when a plague strikes any section of the land, though plagues usually die out with the coming of the winter months. Little is then said in defense of state rights, for the nation's health and security are at stake. Child labor is a plague that smites its immediate victims and strikes at the heart of the whole nation twelve months in the year. It is a problem of the nation and by the nation, a problem to be met with courage and wisdom and prevision.

Democracy and religion must unite for the protection of the child. In a monarchy men are subject to the king's will. In a democracy the child ought to be an object of the government's concern. The church of yesterday persists in childish rites; the church of to-morrow will insist upon the rights of the child. This is the children's hour—between the dark and the daylight—the darkness of the children's wrongs that is passing, and the daylight of children's rights that is dawning.

Upon hearing that the anti-slavery resolutions of Stephen Phillips had been rejected by the Whig Convention in Faneuil Hall, in 1846, Whittier spoke out in earnest and unmistakable terms against the shame of this place:

"Tell us not of banks and tariffs, cease your paltry peddler cries;  
Shall the good state sink her honor that your gambling stocks may rise?  
Would ye barter men for cotton, that your gains may sum up higher?  
Must we kiss the feet of Moloch, pass our children through the fire?  
Is the dollar only real? God and truth and right a dream?  
Weighed against your lying ledgers must our manhood kick the beam?"

To-day, after the lapse of sixty years, we appeal to the conscience of the manhood and womanhood of the nation, and again we ask whether our children are to be passed through the fire, whether weighed against lying ledgers, the childhood of our children must kick the beam. Let us have no fear for the answer of the American democracy.